

TO

A LADY

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ON

EDUCATION.

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ON
EDUCATION.

IN every treatise on Education that has fallen in my way to peruse, there have been some excellent rules joined to what appeared to me many capital errors. I will not, therefore, pretend to determine, which, upon the whole, may be called the best; but will venture to say, that a servile imitation of either must be injurious.

Some few general rules may be laid down that will equally suit all children in the earliest age of infancy, but these cease to be of use as soon as the temper, or rather natural dispositions, can be discovered, when those inherent propensities, those predispositions, which every child may, I think, be said to bring into the world with it, must be closely attended to, in order to form

form an advantageous plan of education. Those natural features of the mind are as various as those of the face, and it is as difficult to find two children with whom exactly the same method of instruction, or the same sort of correction will suit, as it is to find two constitutions that require exactly the same kind and quantity of food and medicine.

The main point therefore to be regarded in writing on this subject is, to avoid advancing any maxims that how good and useful they may be found in particular cases, will not allow of a general application; and to keep so clear of all ambiguity of expression, that the words made use of cannot possibly be taken in any sense but that intended to be conveyed; as the greatest mischief must arise from the misapplying, or misunderstanding of rules, which in that case become a sanction to errors, because the judgement, apt to rest too securely on those rules it has once deliberately adopted, is often so prejudiced in favour of their utility, as not to see the evident disadvantages, that must arise from a general and implicit observance of those particular directions, which may be as pernicious to one disposition as they are serviceable to another.

Thus you see, madam, I have confined all the beneficial directions that the wisest man could give for the education of a child, whose natural propensities he knew nothing of, to those very few certain invariable rules, which
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being equally adapted to all the human species, cannot be misapplied to any. This narrow field we soon shall travel over.

Let us begin with food and raiment, the two first things necessary. The former I know you will, if possible administer yourself in the manner nature has intended; where this happens, by some accident, to be impracticable, which is very rarely the case, cows milk, diluted by water 'till it is brought to the same consistence of the mother's, unmixed either with flour, bread, biscuit or sugar, is by far the best substitute, and, as coming the nearest to what nature intended, will agree the best with every constitution; in hot weather the milk should be fresh drawn, at least once in eight hours, and never given warmer than it comes from the cow. The finest children I ever saw were rear'd in this manner; without once tasting any thing else for the first twelve months, and in a single instance I knew it continued for eighteen months with equal success. This method is undoubtedly preferable to the bare hazard of imbibing ill humour, or disease, from a woman whose temper and constitution must be imperfectly known; here a mother's close inspection is absolutely necessary, it being almost impossible to make the lower class of people, who are hired to take the care of children, believe the utility of this uncommon method; and consequently, unless the most prudent precautions are taken to enforce the obedience of these orders, it will be in vain to give them.

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The clothing of children should in this climate, at first be warm; if born in the summer it must not be lessened till the return of hot weather after the ensuing winter, if in the winter this may be done in the June following, provided the weather be seasonable; and great care should be taken to abate the warmth of their clothing so gradually, that the difference may be imperceptible to them. After it is thus reduc'd to a proper standard, (which in my own opinion can hardly be too light, but in that you must judge for yourself) no alteration should ever be made in consequence of the changing atmosphere, but an exact equality in the warmth of their habit preserved through all the seasons of the year, the utility of which will be proved by every experiment.

Many prudent alterations have of late years been made in the first dress of infants, but many more are yet wanting; the barbarous custom of swathing is not yet universally exploded, and others little less injurious too generally retained; particularly that of dividing their garments into a multiplicity of pieces, which not only prolong the uneasy sensation, which to them always accompanies dressing, but by the unequal pressure of different bandages, their shape is often injured, and their health often impaired; the whole of a child's first habit need consist of no more than three pieces, viz. a shirt, a robe, and a cap; the two last should be quilted of a proper thickness to be sufficiently warm; the cap should be fastened by a
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band of soft linen under the chin, sewed to one side of it and buttoned on the other; if a knot is thought necessary for girls, that should first be sewed on the cap; the robe and shirt should be made open before, the sleeves put into each other, that both may be put on together; they must be wide enough in the back to prevent any difficulty in getting the last arm through; the robe should lap over on the breast, and be fastened by flat buttons, placed at different distances, to make it more or less tight, which is preferable to strings as being the quickest. By this method the whole **business** of dressing (which is evidently a most disagreeable operation to infants, and with which it has been customary to torment them for two hours at a time,) may be dispatch'd in two minutes, and in a manner so easy to themselves as scarcely to occasion a cry; which is a matter of much greater consequence than is generally thought. When they are coated, that may be managed as expeditiously, and with as much ease by tacking the petticoat and robe to the stays, which instead of lacing should be buttoned on; loose plaits might hang from the top of the robe, and fall over the buttons in such a manner, as to make a much prettier dress than that now used, and this continued for the first three or four years would not only contribute much to the regularity of their growth, but also to the sweetness of their temper, which early teasing is too apt to sour.

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The infamous custom of bundling up infants in a parcel of clothes intended to receive and retain all the evacuations of nature, and by which they are so confined as not to have any free motion of their limbs, very probably took its rise as much from laziness as ignorance; for certain it is that a child, properly attended, may, within a month after its birth, be so managed, as to make such a precaution wholly unnecessary. Instinct, in the first stage of infancy, is much the same in the human species as in the brute creation; you know how this matter is managed by the latter, their young know it also, and always wait the directions given by the dam, who is too attentive to neglect the proper seasons; in the same manner may children immediately be taught by certain signs, and by this means used to be perfectly cleanly from the first. Those who have been habituated to such a method, if by chance left too long, will indicate their wants in the most expressive manner, and repeat that indication till they are attended to; from hence it is evident that any inconveniency of that sort may be prevented by proper management; without having recourse to a method as injurious as it is offensive.

With regard to diet, I know not that any particular regimen after children are past the state of infancy is absolutely necessary, the most plain and simple kinds are certainly best; if for no other reason, than because, they will not be tempted to eat too much, which in every
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period of life, is the baneful source of innumerable diseases; to regulate the quantity, is, I believe, much more material than the quality of their food; it will contribute much to their health to bring them early to three or four regular meals in a day, without giving them any thing to eat in the intermediate spaces, because by throwing in continually new matters, the regular course of digestion is interrupted, the tone of the stomach weakened, and a bad chyle produced. Water is the best liquor, and in all the little complaints they are incident to, water-gruel and abstinence are generally better remedies than medicine. Worms they will escape being troubled with, if they have but a small quantity of fruit, and that perfectly ripe; under which restrictions they may very safely be permitted to have some of every kind in season, so much for the body.

Let us now take a view of the unnatural manner in which infants are generally treated, and the variety of needless torments they are made to undergo. The scene often commences by throwing at once the full blaze of day on their half opened eyes, or, if they make their first appearance in the night, ignorance and cruelty gives them equal torment; by the help of a candle held to their faces, the extreme anguish of the aching sight, produces a cry of distress, which gives them the wish'd relief of obscurity, till the next curious person renews the torture. This scene may perhaps be repeated
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ten times in the first hour of a child's life, with exactly the same effects.—When the painful operation of dress commences, the covering is thoughtlessly taken from the child's face, a violent cry is the immediate consequence, and often continued by a succession of disagreeable sensations for two hours, exclusive of a little intermixture of rocking, when probably the loud discord of the nurses voice, ignorantly exerted to quiet the suffering babe's complaint, may give as much pain to the tender auditory nerve, unaccustomed to the vibration of sounds, as the unusual glare of light had before imparted to the optic nerve; add to this the variety of uneasy postures the infant must be placed in, to get on and come at to fasten, a multiplicity of separate garments, with the ridiculous custom of giving a spoonful of a most nauseous mixture, the first thing to be swallowed, and it will amount to evident proof that we have contrived to employ the first three or four hours of a child's life, in giving successive torment to every sense; by light, noise, medicine, and uneasy positions.

When after all this pain and trouble, the poor creature is what they call dress'd, the unnatural confinement of its limbs, is a continual punishment, which never can be submitted to with ease, tho' it may in time be rendered by custom more familiar; of this there needs no other proof, than the visible and extreme pleasure, that all children discover when stript of their incumbrance, the content and satisfaction with
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which they stretch themselves, enjoying the freedom of voluntary motion, and the uneasiness and dislike, if not fretfulness, alway conspicuous the moment the restraint begins to be renewed, in putting on their shackles.

I am convinced beyond a doubt that to these and other instances of our own mismanagement is wholly owing that continual cry of infants, which, from being customary, is erroneously supposed natural to them. Was the pain of body inflicted by this mismanagement, the only ill consequence resulting from it, that alone every feeling heart would wish to alleviate; yet this is a trifling consideration, compared to the more injurious and often irreparable effects produced by the ill impression, thus early made on the mind. Peevishness is the first lesson taught by the infliction of pain, obstinacy is its offspring, that confirmed by indulgence, takes too deep root hardly ever to be eradicated; hence flow innumerable mischiefs in future life, the infants by teasing and fretfulness obtain things improper for them, they become humourfome, and instead of being governed by their parents or tutors attain the government of them, much to their hurt indeed.

Were these absurd customs exchanged for a more rational method, the advantages would be very great, a few plain rules might be established suitable to every individual of the species in the first period of their existence, as not to admit a possibility of their being misapplied; the first of these is, that the unavoidable change
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of customs, should be introduced so gradually as to be scarce perceptible; after the first office is performed to the young stranger (during which great care should be taken, to keep all light from his eyes) he should be suffered to lie quiet at least half an hour in the nurse's lap, wrapped in warm flannel, and longer, if disposed to rest, before he is put to the trouble of dressing; light should then be let in by very slow degrees, just enough for the purpose of dressing, the operation will take only five minutes, if the clothes be made as before described and recommended, and if made to fit easy, you will find the child bear it without any sort of complaint.

As the chief point to be regarded is to avoid giving any needless cause of uneasiness, every natural want should be carefully attended to and supply'd before it produces any painful sensation. All children will discover their desire of food by motions that plainly show they are searching for something, these motions will be continued some time without a cry, which is only the consequence of repeated disappointments in this search; such signs from them should always be waited for, carefully observed, and immediately answered; the offer of food when not wanted, being to the full as teasing to infants as the delay of it when required.— I have often thought that a round flexible pipe might be contrived, for the feeding dry'd nursed children, full of small holes at the end, within which pipe a piece of sponge might be placed to stop the liquor from flowing out, unless

less press or drawn by suction, and this pipe screw'd to a spout on the vessel which contains the liquor; something of this kind would come nearer to the method in which they receive the milk from the breast, and such a pipe might remain in their mouths till they dropp'd asleep, or took their heads from it, but whether an instrument of this sort could be made to answer I know not.

With regard to sleep, nature alone ought to dictate, nor should a nurse ever be suffered to lull a child to rest by rocking him in a cradle, which they are too apt to do, and then leave him till repeated cries force them to resume the troublesome office of attendance; an infant who is continually play'd with, and talk'd to while awake, will insensibly drop asleep in the nurse's lap, she may then lay him down and refresh herself, but must carefully watch the moment of his waking, and take him up before there is time for a complaint, that the desired change of posture may not be procured by a cry of impatience. Within a few weeks not half the sleep will be required which was at first necessary 'twill not be found difficult in a short time, so to divert a child by constant attention, as to keep him awake most part of the day; the sooner this can be done habitually the better, because then he will sleep quietly almost all the night, which is more beneficial to the child, and much less fatigue to the nurse.

THE
SECOND LETTER
ON
EDUCATION,
CONTINUED.

Children thus managed, whose natural wants are always observed and properly supply'd; will never cry, unless from some accidental illness; and then not violently, but rather in a mournful tone; at such times no particular efforts should be used to quiet them; no lamentations expressed, by a change of noise in those about them, but exactly the same method pursued of varying their posture, observing only to move them gently, because the little complaints they are incident to, are of a sort that may be sometimes encreased by those quick motions, which are a proper and useful exercise to them when well; if you can discover one posture to be more easy, than another, that may be continued, playing with and talking to them as usual, without shewing the least appearance of pity, which in all cases

cases is injurious. The pain occasioned by cutting of teeth, would I believe, be much less severe, if the use of the coral was banished, because rubbing the gums tends only to harden them, and must consequently make the passage of the teeth more difficult.

Though every natural want ought to be instantly relieved, those of fancy and humour should never on any occasion be indulged; a rattle should be given them as early as they are able to divert themselves with it, and other little toys soon added, for variety is necessary to the amusement; those playthings should be often changed by the nurse, for when the novelty wears off the entertainment ceases, but the humourous inclination, which makes children reach eagerly after every thing they see, must never be comply'd with; on the contrary, whenever they stretch out their hands impatiently after any thing though one of their own toys, it should be refused them with a grave steady face, accompanied by the plain words, no, you must not have it yet, the meaning of this, they will very soon so thoroughly comprehend, as to be immediately contented, on receiving such an answer, even long before they are supposed to understand the language; from the first, they should, on every occasion, be spoken to in this plain and distinct manner, but never in a loud and shrill voice, by which means they will know every thing you say, whilst incapable of forming any articulate sound themselves.

I have seen ten children thus managed, always quiet, good humour'd, obedient and as intelligent at four months old, as they usually are at a year and a quarter; and am certain that it will be found the surest means of either cherishing a good natural disposition, or correcting a bad one, and will lay the best foundation to be afterwards worked upon.

These my dear Louisa, are all the invariable rules I can recollect that are equally suitable to every child, and may be put in practice to all infants, not only without any possibility of injury, but with an absolute certainty of being serviceable.— When their natural propensities, predispositions, or inherent turn of temper can be discovered, by these, the treatment of them must be solely regulated, and as they are hardly ever found to be exactly the same in any two instances, there is no possibility of forming any system that can be of general use. It is then the part of every sensible prudent mother to regard attentively the different tendencies of her children, so as to be able to form her plan of education, suitable to each

To one, emulation is useful; to another, the suppression of it, is absolutely necessary; some dispositions require constant encouragement as a spur to action; others, a continual check upon their activity; with one, gentle and alluring methods will succeed best; with another, sincerity and threats: These can only be regulated by such a close observation as will prove the utility of either method to each individual; and where a
mother

mother discharges this important office properly (which for the first six years belongs wholly to her) I believe one may venture to say, the children will generally turn out well; for to ignorance or neglect, in this early period, I am convinced, is owing almost all the capital errors, in the conduct of succeeding life.

I know not whether one other general rule might not be added, viz. that beating can never be of service to any disposition. I will not positively assert this as an incontrovertible truth, though it is my own opinion founded on observation, having never yet, in any instance, seen it attended with good effects, but in many, with very pernicious ones; and believe it will generally be found, that mild tempers are irreparably dejected, and sprightly ones hardened into incomparable obstinacy by it, not to mention the cruelty, which alone is a sufficient objection, if its necessity or use be doubtful.

When you become a mother, if you will put the method here proposed in practice, I will venture to answer for its success; the greatest difficulty is to find a nurse that will punctually obey the directions given when out of your sight, and this is a point of the utmost consequence, as on a perfect steadiness and exact equality of behaviour depend all the advantages accruing from the method.

Whatever may be your own inclination, such is your situation in life and such the customs of the world you live in, that it will not be in your power to have your children always with
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you; should you suckle them, they will be brought to you only at stated times, and left at others to the care of a servant, the main point to be regarded is such a servant, as may be confided in, who will pay a strict obedience to all your orders, without ever substituting her own opinion in the room of the directions given, this is a matter of so much consequence, that it will be necessary for you to keep a close watch over her till you believe she may be safely trusted.

All the parts of your duty, my dear Louisa have been so well discharged, that I have not the least doubt of the propriety of your conduct in every new relation, and shall rejoice to see you set as laudable an example in the character of a wife and a mother as you have already in those of a daughter and a friend—that all the happiness these new relations can bestow may be your portion, is the ardent wish of

Yours, &c.

TO

LOUISA.

I Can never be unwilling to comply with any request of yours, my dear, but little more can be added to the general directions, my last contained, and your own good judgement will suggest all that is necessary, without any assistance. It will at once occur to you, that, as opinions can as easily be made habitual as customs, it is a matter of great moment, to give an early habit of thinking rightly, and that this will more effectually be done by the general tenor of the conversations that pass in the hearing of children, than by any particular instructions address'd to themselves: Thus, for instance, if they always hear cleanliness, mentioned as of essential consequence, finery with contempt, and those people spoken as insignificant triflers, who discover any regard to the show of dress, they will insensibly acquire an habit of esteeming cleanliness, the only material part of their own dress, without paying any sort of attention to the ornaments of it.

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I have seen the effect of this method in a child, who at four years old, gravely censured the weakness of a person's judgement that had admired his new buckles. In the same manner benevolence to mankind, compassion toward the brute and insect creation, and every other principle may be implanted in infancy, and insensibly improved and strengthened in the mind, till right opinions are so habitually rooted, as to influence every part of the conduct through all future life; which is seldom if ever effected by formal precepts, and grave instructions. What children imbibe as by accident, from the sentiments of others, always makes a stronger and more lasting impression than any lessons, which appear to be intended peculiarly for themselves, this may perhaps be owing to the constrained attention required in the latter case, whereas in the former 'tis always voluntary, and, if not checked, will be constant from their natural curiosity; this curiosity, properly managed, is the best ground you can have to work upon, yet I have often with concern heard children so severely reprimanded for it, as to make them afraid of seeming to hear the conversations that passed in their presence; on the contrary, not the least notice should apparently be taken of their attention, while every thing said before them, should be regulated by the expectation of it; on this account chiefly the bringing them into mixed company is injurious, as the contrariety of opinions, will be apt to confuse their minds, which to
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be advantageously formed, must be used to a perfect sameness of sentiment in all whom they converse with, or are attended by; here, also the great difficulty is, to meet with servants who will minutely observe every direction given them, which is a point of so much consequence, as to deserve the utmost care, you will here see the necessity of extending your instructions to them, even to the most trifling circumstances, that nothing may be left to their own judgement, which can never be depended on, and that those servants who particularly belong to the nursery, should only be admitted into it, nor on any occasion others be allowed to converse with them there, for reasons too obvious to need repeating.

The impropriety of one custom may not, perhaps from its being so general, occur to you with all the strength it deserves; I mean that of promising wives and husbands as a distant reward for the good behaviour of children; to which may be added the no less absurd practice of teaching them to give each other that appellation almost as soon as they can speak. I believe, my dear Louisa, you need only reflect seriously upon the effect this must necessarily have on their young minds, and on the consequences that may naturally be supposed to follow from it, to suggest to yourself all that I can say on the subject. Your judgement is sufficient to direct you in all the new relations you are entering upon, and your invariable inclination to discharge your duty, will secure

a constant attention, to the dictates of it; nor have I the least doubt of your setting an example, in every respect, worthy of your imitation, and consequently of your enjoying through life, as great a share of happiness as this imperfect state can admit of, to be increased only by that unalterable felicity beyond the grave, which must be the reward of virtue like yours——this opinion continually affords the sincerest pleasure to

Your affectionate &c.

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